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ABSTRACT

The Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation--Behavior (FIRO-B) was administered to 504 Japanese, 219 Australian, 73 Korean, and 397 United States college students to assess interpersonal needs in the four cultures. The FIRO-B provides ratings for inclusion, control, and affection needs on an "expressed" dimension to indicate the behavior people express toward others, and on a "wanted" dimension to indicate the behavior people want expressed toward them. The following results were observed and explained through cultural differences: the only significant differences between the Americans and Australians occurred on the expressed inclusion and wanted control needs, with the Australians exhibiting stronger needs in these areas. The United States students were significantly different from the Japanese on all the interpersonal needs scores except wanted control. The Koreans exhibited weaker inclusion needs than the United States students, but stronger needs to express control than the Americans. (RL)

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A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF INTERPERSONAL NEEDS

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Interpersonal communication and interpersonal needs, Scott and Powers (1978) contend, are fundamentally interdependent. People communicate because talking to someone is as vital a need to a person's psychological well-being as eating and drinking is to a person's physical well-being. People also communicate because communication is the medium through which many human needs are satisfied. But communication does more than satisfy the communicator's needs, it helps satisfy the needs of the other persons in the communicative transaction as well. Thus the ability to recognize the needs people experience becomes a factor in explaining much of human behavior.

Harms (1973) extends the Scott and Powers contention to intercultural communication. He believes that the area of interpersonal needs provides an important source of information about intercultural communication. Understanding the extent to which these needs are satisfied in different cultures should help explain the "why" and "how" of cross-cultural oral encounters.

Schutz (1967) postulates that every person has three interpersonal needs, that is, needs that can be satisfied only through relationships with other people. Inclusion is the need to establish and maintain satisfying interactions and associations. Control is the need to establish and maintain satisfying relationships related to control and power. Affection is the need for close, personal relationships with others.

This study explored the strength of those interpersonal needs among college students in four cultures--American, Australian, Japanese, and Korean. For

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comparison purposes, the needs of the Americans were compared with those of each of the other groups.

Method

The students who participated were 504 Japanese from Otsuma Women's, Nihon, Waseda and Yokohama City universities; 397 Americans from the University of Hawaii; 219 Australians from Armidale College of Advanced Education; and 73 Koreans from the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. The four groups were divided almost equally among males and females in an age range of 18 to 24 years (mean: 20 years).

The Schutz (1967) scale to measure interpersonal needs, the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation--Behavior (FIRO-B), was administered to the students in early fall 1978. Six scores are derived from the FIRO-B: expressed inclusion, control and affection needs and wanted inclusion, control and affection needs. The scale's expressed dimension indicates the behavior a person expresses toward others; the wanted dimension, the behavior the person wants expressed toward him.

In Japan and Korea, the respondents were English-trained and responded to the English version of the FIRO-B. English-speaking faculty collaborated on the data collection in both countries. To analyze the data, Tuccy's T-test Procedure (1975) was used since it was designed for independent samples of unequal size.

Results

The means and standard deviations for each student group on the six FIRO-B scales are presented in Table 1. The mean scores of the Americans were compared to those of the Australians, Japanese and Koreans and the significant t-test calculations are given.

In terms of the group comparisons, the Australians had a significantly higher expressed inclusion ("I tend to join social organizations, participate in group activities, and avoid being alone.") average than the Americans but had no signficantly different wanted inclusion ("I like people to invite me to things.") average. The Japanese and Koreans had significantly lower expressed and wanted inclusion mean scores than the Americans.

With regard to expressed control ("I try to take charge of things when with people."), the American and Australian scores were not significantly different but the Americans, Japanese and Koreans were. The Japanese averages were significantly lower, the Koreans significantly higher. The opposite results occurred on the wanted control ("I let other people decide what to do, influence my actions, take charge of things.") mean scores. The Australians' were significantly lower than the Americans while there was no significant difference between the Japanese, Koreans and Americans on this need.

The expressed affection ("I try to have close, personal relations with people.") averages were not significantly different between the Americans, Australians and Koreans but were significantly higher between the Americans and Japanese. The wanted affection ("I like people to get close toward me.") means followed almost the same pattern: no significant difference between the Americans, Australians and Koreans and a significantly lower difference between the Americans and Japanese.

Discussion

When the Americans and Australians were compared, the only significant differences between them occurred on the expressed inclusion and wanted control needs. For the Australians, these needs were stronger than the Americans. A partial explanation for the results may be Australia's geographical isolation.

Literally "down under" from the traditional centers of world power, Australians feel isolated and this feeling manifests itself in the need to join groups, to be a part of group activities, and to be controlled by group life (Fischer, 1976).

The Americans were significantly different than the Japanese on five of the six needs. Only on the wanted control need was there no significant difference. In their comparison of group life in America and Japan, Cathcart and Cathcart (1976) account for much of this difference. While both cultures are characterized by highly developed group activity, the values placed on group life is almost completely diametrical. In America, the family functions primarily to protect the children while preparing them to leave and assume a larger role in society. As a result, Americans seldom feel an all consuming loyalty to one group, tending to be on the lookout for new groups to join in order to fulfill their interpersonal needs.

In Japan, the family does not prepare the child to leave it and enter the social order. Rather, the child is taught to be self-less and to be group-centered and learns the rules and rituals required for life-long family membership. The Japanese forge strong bonds of loyalty to the family and they rarely join other groups unless they are work or school groups. Thus, the Japanese have relatively few contacts outside of the family and one or two other groups. But intra-group solidarity characterizes membership in these groups, according to Nakane (1970), with considerable in-group interaction, reciprocal obligations and expectations, and fulfillment of interpersonal needs occurring. Therefore, except for the wanted control need, the other needs measured by the FIRO-B should be weak and the findings support this assumption. The wanted control need's strength seems attributable to the expectation that the Japanese want the group to influence their actions.

TABLE 1

COMPARISONS OF AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS TO THOSE IN AUSTRALIA, JAPAN AND KOREAN ON FIRO-B

College Groups	Scales: Inclusion Expressed	Inclusion Wanted	Affection Expressed	Affection Wanted	Control Expressed	Control Wanted
Americans compared						
Mean	4.59	4.77	4.45	5.38	2.11	3.79
Standard Deviation	2.19	3.40	2.70	2.74	2.13	2.48
To Australians						
Mean	5.05	5.13	4.53	5.33	1.80	2.91
Standard Deviation	2.10	3.27	2.58	2.55	2.08	2.22
t Comparison	2.43*	N.S.D.	N.S.D.	N.S.D.	N.S.D.	4.20***
To Japanese						
Mean	3.90	1.61	4.84	4.36	1.83	4.09
Standard Deviation	1.89	2.58	2.54	2.23	1.89	2.16
t Comparison	5.06**	15.85***	2.20*	6.23***	2.14*	N.S.D.
To Koreans						
Mean	3.78	2.82	4.80	5.21	4.61	3.67
Standard Deviation	1.94	2.69	2.48	2.53	2.40	1.82
t Comparison	2.63**	4.13***	N.S.D.	N.S.D.	8.13***	N.S.D.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

The Koreans exhibited weaker inclusion needs than the Americans. Like the Japanese, the family plays a strong role in the Korean social structure. But the structure, according to Oliver (1944), has its genesis in the village and its community of families. Village governments operated democratically for the most part and encouraged the oral expression of opinions. As a consequence, the Koreans are apt to be orally aggressive, speaking out when necessary and desiring to control interpersonal transactions (Ishii, Klopf, Cambra, 1978). The findings support this point as the Koreans had a significantly stronger need to express control than the Americans.

The study presents several methodological problems which need to be considered when interpreting the findings. First, all of the students responded to the same English language version of the FIRO-B. Whether this untranslated version was linguistically and conceptually equivalent for all groups is not known. It is plausible that an unknown portion of the findings are attributable to variations in meaning the test carries across the groups. Even if the students uniformly understood all the items and their nuances, this high level of English competence, especially among the Japanese and Korean respondents, would seem to set them apart from their less linguistically capable countrymen. Generalizations about the Japanese and Koreans then would have to be tentative at best.

Other problems range from the difficulties of comparing peoples with different homogeneous backgrounds to the size of the groups. In view of these and similar problems encountered in cross-cultural research, further research is necessary to insure that such problems have not contaminated the findings reported here.

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